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MDT Employee Newsletter

March 1992

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Director's Column: the department forges ahead with several new steps to increase efficiency and service to the public.

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Bonnie Sedita of the Missoula District makes it her job to promote equal opportunity in MDT. Her efforts include production of a video featuring non-traditional employment for women and work with the Salish Kootenai Tribal College.

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The Federal Transportation Act brings changes to Montana. Some additional funding will be available to the state with passage of the new bill, and sweeping changes are expected in the way federal funds are allocated.

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Service awards and retirements at MDT.

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How to avoid carpal tunnel syndrome. This disorder sometimes causes extreme hand and wrist pain and is a result of repetitive motion, but it can be avoided by maintaining the proper hand position while working and by using hand exercises.

Volunteering–a Real Lifesaver

There's good reason for employees at a Glendive service station to get all choked up when they hear the name Carole Olson. But because of her volunteer efforts they probably won't.

Olson is a personnel specialist in the Glendive District who never knew, until recently, if her message was getting through when she taught CPR and first aid classes.

On October 30, an employee of a Super America in Glendive choked on a piece of candy. Another employee, Roxanne Newman, who had received instruction from Olson, put her training into action. She performed the Heimlich Maneuver, successfully clearing the breathing obstruction.

"Carole has given the employee's of Super America 4067 a gift of knowledge that employees and customers alike may benefit from in an emergency situation," said Newman in a letter of appreciation. "As one can see, the knowledge we gained in this CPR class enabled us to handle a crisis situation," she said.

"I don't want to be the hero," Olson said. "Roxanne is really the hero, because she had the courage to use what she was taught," she said, adding she felt humble when she learned of the incident.

Teaching has been a large part of Olson's life. She teaches a night class at Dawson Community College and has taught CPR and first aid through the American Red Cross for more than four years. Prior to that, she taught and was principal of Sacred Heart Catholic School for 17 years. "I enjoy people; that's what I like best about my work," she said.

For her efforts, Olson received letters of commendation from Glendive District Engineer Bruce Russell and Director John Rothwell. Rothwell congratulated her for her part in saving a life and commended her for her community service.

For her part, Newman received a big hug the following day from the lady whose life she saved.

"Carole is our local *Interchange* correspondent, and was very reluctant to write a story about herself," said Vicki Temple, a word processing technician in Glendive. So she and other fellow employees teamed up to relieve Olson of the uncomfortable duty of commending herself for a job well done.

Carole Olson (left) shows Margie Nasheim of the Glendive District the proper hand placement for the Heimlich Maneuver.

Director's Column

The department has seen dramatic changes on both the federal and state level over the past year—it's been an important time of transition and progress.

Headquarters has been reorganized to improve work flow and provide better access to services. By now, most offices are beginning to settle in their new "homes" and the improvements in efficiency are becoming more apparent.

And the new Federal Transportation Act is good news for Montana, providing us with an increased share of the federal program and increased flexibility on design standards and decisions about where the federal funds should be spent. What could very easily have been a program resulting in substantial losses to Montana has instead been built into a positive program, a very beneficial change. (*see page 3*)

Our intent is to use the flexibility in the program to advance Montana's number one priority—addressing the needs on the former federal-aid primary and secondary roads, the two lane roads that serve most Montanans and are most in need of attention.

The one theme that's run through my first year as Director is "no more business as usual" and it's a philosophy that's intended to change the way the department does its work. Improvement in the way we operate means more cost efficient and responsive service to our suppliers, contractors and the public at large.

There are numerous examples of the positive changes – changes that have come about through the efforts of MDT employees:

- We're signing cooperative agreements with local governments to provide rest areas in city parks, and building new rest areas along the primary system highways.
- We've developed a cooperative bus rehabilitation program with the Department of Institutions to extend the service life of buses used by non-profit organizations.
- Montana will have its own Adopt-a-Highway program beginning this spring.
- We're changing our accounting to get federal dollars into our accounts faster.
- We've opened a joint-use vehicle inspection station with Alberta, the first of its kind.
- We're expanding our toll-free, long-distance service for road reports and planning to provide weather and road information in the year-round rest areas.
- Rail and Transit has developed a drug testing kit that's being distributed nationally and has received wide acclaim.
- Our management and computer systems are being continually improved and upgraded to take full advantage of experience and new technology.
- Career ladders are being defined.
- We're developing a strategic plan that will help us focus our efforts and resources and achieve our goals.

My overall goal for the department is simple: to do the best job possible in serving the public. With your help and dedication, we've taken giant steps toward this goal, and we're moving together toward a positive and productive future for MDT and the people of this state. I thank you very much for your continued support.

Equal Opportunity more than a Slogan to Sedita

Equal opportunity is not just another slogan to Bonnie Sedita; she made it her job.

Sedita is a personnel specialist with the Missoula District. She's been working to provide non-traditional training to women through a federally funded program in Missoula.

She also initiated two training courses for the Salish Kootenai Tribal College in Pablo with equipment provided by MDT.

"When females think of the transportation department, they think it's a man's world; they don't realize they fit here, and I'm here to show them they do," said Sedita who added she sees it as part of her job to recruit women and minorities.

The Non-traditional Employment Training (NET) Project is a federal grant program sponsored by the U. S. Department of Labor and several foundations to provide wider opportunities for women. Missoula is one of three cities across the country selected for the program.

Information will be the primary tool used to promote non-traditional placement. Sedita and project team members will work to increase the number of women in non-traditional on-the-job training slots, provide program participants with information about job availability and help women gain and retain placement in those jobs.

Sedita will be producing a video for the project scheduled to be completed in late April. "The video is on recruitment to target females and get their interest in non-traditional jobs," she said.

It features women in such roles as truck drivers, designers, construction workers and carpenters and will include segments on sexual harassment, wages, physical demands, travel and day-care.

Salish Kootenai Training

Sedita, a member of the Crow tribe, initially became interested in minority recruitment in response to the department's affirmative action plan. She said she has always been concerned about the welfare of Native Americans.

A six-week construction truck drivers' training course and a nine-month survey aid course will now be offered thanks to Sedita's efforts. She assisted in developing the courses and will be participating in the classes to discuss employment opportunities with MDT.

Federal Transportation Bill brings Funding, Highway Designation Changes to Montana

(Editor's note: This story is based on material prepared by Strategic Planning and Public Affairs staff.

Full bid lettings have resumed at the Montana Department of Transportation following the enactment of the 1991 Federal Transportation Bill December 18.

Federal-aid highway construction in Montana will increase over the six years of the new program. And given the no-growth or even negative-growth proposed in other legislation, Montana has clearly won some ground.

The construction program will grow this year and continue to grow in the years that follow. We've been accustomed in recent years to about $100 million in federal aid and a healthy $130 million total construction program. But the most recent federal funding authorization resulted in a total state construction program of about $150 million. And the program is now expected to grow to about $165 million over the 1992 federal fiscal year and $180 million in following years.

Montana will also receive nearly $20 million for work on four interchanges: the Shiloh interchange at Billings; Airport interchange in Missoula; North 19th in Bozeman; and the Belgrade interchange, and significant increases are provided for Indian reservation roads and other federal land programs.

For non-interstate routes and projects, Montana's federal share will be about 87 percent, however the state must continue an entirely state-funded construction program.

Perhaps the most dramatic change under the new bill is the restructuring of the federal-aid highway system. It recognizes the nation's interstate highway system is essentially complete and sets new federal transportation policy goals.

Highlights

- The bill authorizes a six-year program.
- Montana's federal-aid highway program will increase.
- Additional federal funds are granted to four Montana interchanges.
- Montana must continue its committment to the state-funded program.
- A National Highway System replaces the primary, secondary and urban highway systems.
- The transit provisions of this bill increase federal funding available for transit and slightly change the planning and state matching fund requirements.

For the past several decades, federal-aid funding has been allocated to the interstate, primary, secondary and urban systems. The new program eliminates all of these familiar systems except the interstate. The current interstate system will be merged with a relatively small number of roads from the primary system to create the new National Highway System or NHS.

A final NHS is to be designated by the fall of 1995. Until then, all of Montana's principal arterial routes will be eligible for this funding. But the final designation is expected to include only about 30 percent of the primary system routes.

The new act gives states considerable flexibility to custom-tailor a large share of their highway program. For example, it is possible individual project approvals will no longer be necessary for non-NHS projects, as they were for projects under the previous system classifications.

Happenings at MDT

Service Awards

Service awards were presented in December in the following categories:

30 years

Delmar Lemons; Gerald Burrows.

25 years

Leroy Lucke; Glen Bollinger; Thomas J. Barnard; Vernon Jones; Darold Reinhardt; John Rooney.

20 years

George Cruickshank; Floyd Henderson; Cindy Anders; Mary Ann Robinson; Jack Holstrom.

15 years

William Kosola; Roger Pearson; Joseph Stratman, Jr.

10 years

Lawrence Rooney; David Fetters; Edward Fallang; Donald Bicher; Marilyn Dana.

5 years

Patrick Metzger; Jeff Gleason; Alexander Eggert; John Seidl; Evan Erikson; Audrey Skyberg.

Retirements

30 or more years of service with state government:

Richard Anderson, Engineer Technician, Dillon, 38 years, 6 months.

Ralph Hobbs, Equipment Operator, Hamilton, 35 years 8 months.

Henry Howard, Field Supervisor, Lolo, 31 years, 8 months (19 MDT).

Longevity honors for 20-plus years:

Boyd Bomar, Materials Lab Specialist, East Helena, 24 years, 9 months.

Carl Swanson, Field Maintenance Chief, Great Falls, 28 years, 8 months (27 MDT).

Raymond Anderson, Accountant III, Helena, 28 years, one month.

Honors for less than 20 years:

William Lose, Truck Driver, Bridger, 11 years, 7 months.

Preventing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Your wrist aches, your fingers feel numb, you have difficulty doing even the most simple tasks like opening a juice jar. What's going on? It may be that you suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome—a hand disorder resulting from repetitious, forceful motion of the hands and wrists. Carpal tunnel syndrome is common and affects those of us who use the same hand motions over and over again at work or at home—painters, textile workers, word processors, cashiers, electronics assemblers, and many others. Fortunately, you don't need to "grin and bear it." Carpal tunnel syndrome is often preventable through proper hand positioning and hand exercises.

Why Your Hand Hurts

The carpal tunnel is the bony cavity in your wrist through which your nerves and tendons extend to the hand. When you repeat the same hand and wrist movements day in and day out, the excess strain causes tendons to swell and press on the main nerve of the hand. This persistent irritation of the nerve can result in pain, numbness, and dysfunction not only in the hands and wrists, but may extend up to the forearm and elbow as well.

What You Can Do About It

If you are at risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome, why not try to prevent the condition before it occurs? By learning how to position your hands properly and by exercising your hands regularly, you can relieve excess pressure on your tendons and nerves and prevent unnecessary pain and disability.

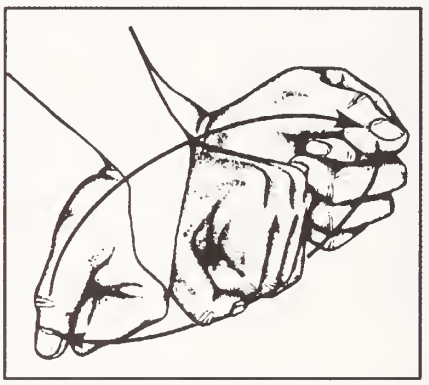
Hand Positioning

When you keep your wrists and elbows straight, you place less pressure on the tendons and nerves in your hands. Try adjusting your work so that you can keep your forearm and hand straight. Use hand tools with the appropriate width, size, and shape—that is, make sure that you can grip the tool comfortably, that the tool can absorb vibration, and that handles are positioned to keep your wrists and hands in alignment.

Hand Exercises

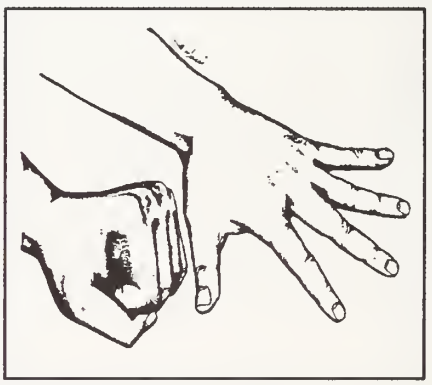
The following exercises, when done daily, can help strengthen wrist and hand muscles and can help relieve strain caused by tasks requiring repetitive motions.

Wrist Rotation



Make a fist and rotate your entire hand (from the wrist) in one direction. Repeat 15 times. Switch directions and repeat 15 times. Then, release your hands, and with fingers extended, do the same rotations.

Hand Stretch



Make a fist, then extend your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for about 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat the entire sequence 5-10 times until hands and fingers feel relaxed.

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Update — Department's Strategic Plan

The MDT recently hired the Towers Perrin Firm of San Francisco to assist and guide the development of the department's strategic management plan. Ron Mester of Towers Perrin was in Helena the week of February 17 to kick off the plan.

During his overview, Mester described a two-tiered process to department managers. Phase I, expected to be completed by July 1, identifies a department-wide mission and sets goals for future direction. Phase II focuses on completion of an action plan to move the department closer to the goals identified in Phase I.

A lot of energy is expected to be spent in Phase I to determine a future direction for the department. Final decisions will be based on:

- the department's strengths and weaknesses,
- analysis of transportation issues and trends, and
- potential roles and responsibilities of the department.

Each MDT employee will be asked for input on these topics through a confidential survey.

When you receive the strategic planning survey toward the end of March, please take the time to respond. This is your opportunity to contribute your thoughts on the department's future. For further information, contact Sandy Straehl in Helena at 444-7692.

Help Yourself

Welcome

The Organizational Development Bureau is starting something new.

This is their first supplement to the *Interchange* to provide informative facts about safety and human development. Enjoy!

The Silent Killer

No single substance causes more accidental home poisonings than carbon monoxide. Have your furnace and chimney checked each year. Hot water heaters and other gas appliances should be inspected to insure against leaking fumes. Never run fuel-powered motors inside the house; they can cause carbon monoxide buildup.

This Out!

Montanans are continuing to buckle up throughout the state. Average seat belt use on all roads stands at 67.1 percent. The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is shooting for 70 percent in 1992 so let's remember to buckle our seat belts.

Manager's Corner

Have an office that is stalled or non-productive? Try brainstorming with your employees. They are apt to provide innovative ideas for projects that would benefit your area.

Fight Winter Colds

There are more than 200 different viruses that cause colds. After you recover from one cold, your body is only immune to that one virus, leaving you open for 199 more attacks! You catch colds by hand contact, not weather changes. Wash your hands often, especially if you share a telephone, computer keyboard or tools with others.

Food for Thought

Failures are divided into two classes – those who thought and never did, and those who did and never thought.

John C. Salak

The Ten Best Weight-loss Tips of All Time

- Don't go on a diet; fix the one you've got.
- The longer weight loss takes, the longer it's apt to last.
- Exercise easily but often.
- Expect plateaus.
- Do not seesaw (go up and down in weight).
- Consider dietary fat your worst enemy.
- Consider fiber your best friend.
- Throw away your scale (change your mind set from weight loss to fat loss).
- Count satisfaction in addition to calories.
- Keep busy.

Help Yourself Cont.

Applause

Havre, Lewistown and Bozeman didn't have any accidents involving employees in the month of January.

Back to Back

MDT employees reported nine back injuries in January. That is seven more than December. **Remember** your back as you lift. We are shooting for a goal of less than 50 back injuries for FY 92.

There have been 15 vehicle accidents involving backing for FY 92. Because visibility is often limited, try walking around the vehicle before starting it. Remember: Try **walking** around and your **safety** is sound.

How to Remember What's His Name

A couple of tips to keep you from drawing a blank trying to remember names:

- Pay attention – focus on the verbal exchange;
- Say it again, Sam: repeat the person's name out loud. "Nice to meet you, Sam."
- Play mind games: use visual associations. Angelica = heavenly.
- Take notes: write down something very distinctive about the person you've just met.

Don't "Do It Yourself"

Training subordinates might take a few hours, but it saves hundreds of hours in the future. Recognize the importance of training. The energy you spend training employees will free you to assume more important responsibilities.

Stressed About an Interview?

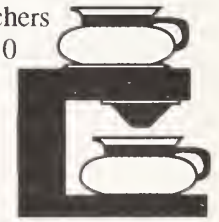
See the Organizational Development Bureau. We have books and tapes you can use to help prepare.

More Food for Thought

Most people believe that it would benefit them if they could get a little more from those who have more. How much more would it benefit them if they would learn a little from those who know more.

William J.H. Boetcker

No More for Me, Thanks



Researchers studied 1,910 men over a 19-year period and discovered a definite link between heart disease and coffee consumption of more than six cups a day. Even after smoking, high blood pressure, diet and high cholesterol levels were factored in, heavy coffee drinking boosted risks of fatal heart disease.

Employee's Corner

What to do when your boss gives you sketchy or conflicting instructions on a project: write a brief summary of the instructions in memo form; then make sure you both have a copy. If a problem erupts, you will be able to back up your claim that you were following mutually agreed-on orders.

Glendive District

On November 19, three Dawson County High School computer classes received a demonstration of the Glendive District's computer aided drawing (CADD) system.

Designer Gary Lundman and Design Tech Dale Boehning showed the progression from drawing by hand to the use of computers, and gave the students a firsthand look at the automatic lettering machine and the road design system used by MDT.

At the end of the demonstration, each class made a design on the CADD system and received a printout of their work.

DCHS instructor Tom Huffman said the students were very impressed with the demonstration since computer-aided drawing was one of many areas covered in the class' curriculum.

In other Glendive news:

• Randy Stanhope, Truck Driver at Colstrip, transferred to Forsyth, effective November 2.

• LeRoy Verwolf is the temporary Truck Driver U5T for the Scobey Section.

• Daniel Hansard transferred from the section at Flowing Wells to Jordan.

Gary Lundman of the Glendive District Design Unit demonstrates one of the computers for students from the "Computer Literacy" class at Dawson County High School.

Helena Right-of-Way Bureau

Kitty Mundt was promoted to office manager of the Right-of-Way Bureau and Martha Crawford is the new office secretary, Kitty's former position. Other new faces in the Right-of-Way Bureau include Tim Tilton in the Lands section and Frank Murphy, review appraiser from Galen, Oregon.

The Right-of-Way Bureau is decentralizing its operations. As a result, Joe Freeman is the new field right-of-way supervisor for the Missoula District and Murdo Wilson is the new field right-of-way supervisor for the Billings District.

As decentralization continues in the weeks and months ahead, other right-of-way agents will continue to transfer to new offices.

In other bureau news: Mary Spaulding left the Lands Section for a new position in the Construction Bureau.

The Office Shuffle

We used to be DOH; now we're MDT.
I'm not sure who I am or who I'm supposed to be.
On Monday, I worked on the first floor;
on Tuesday, my desk went out the door;
Wednesday came, I moved again;
Thursday, "Don't know where I been!"
Used an atlas Friday to find my chair;
Come Monday, we could be anywhere!
Working here isn't for the meek
When you change your office thrice a week.

Editor's note: This bit of wit appeared anonymously in the mail. It reflects a sense many of the headquarters staff felt at times during the recent reorganization. By now, things are back to normal for most of us.

Top 10

Top 10 reasons for working at MDT

10. It's easy to spell.
9. Working for the North Dakota DOT was just too long of a commute.
8. It's a great place to pick up a paycheck.
7. I thought it might give me an "in" with the Highway Patrol.
6. The French disbanded their Foreign Legion.
5. Because, as a matter of fact, I do own the road.
4. So I can have a free subscription to the *Interchange*.
3. Big trucks are my life.
2. The school finally forced me to graduate, and I had nowhere else to turn.
1. Because I really, really like to wear orange.

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Duplicating Services

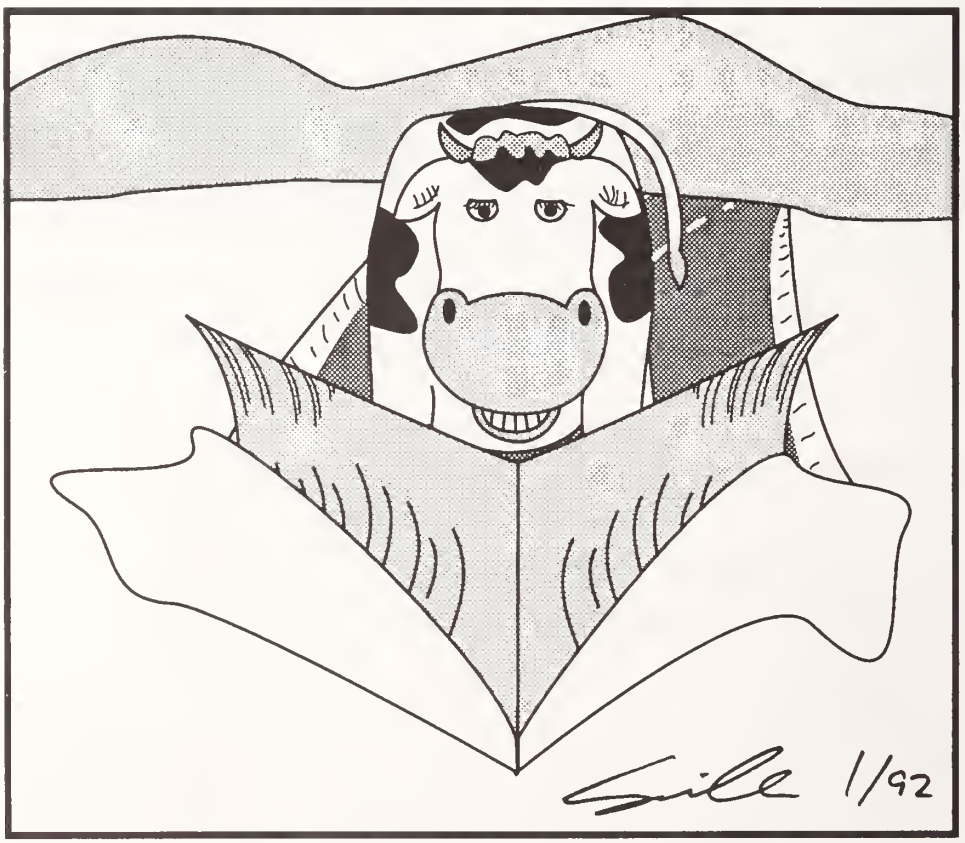
Last October, Duplicating Services in Helena printed close to 1.4 millon sheets, 300,000 more than previous monthly records.

Sometimes it's possible to tie a high production month to an election year or to large amounts of construction, according to Joe Crocifisso, Duplicating Services Supervisor. However, it was only possible to have a record-breaking month, Crocifisso added, because of the work of his outstanding staff.

"This kind of production is the work of a skilled and professional staff that takes pride in doing each and every job well," Crocifisso said. "My hat's off to Jim Brady, Bill Wall, Joyce Holstrom, Pat Hamper and Bob Vonda."

Crocifisso added that his staff is the reason he is so good looking! Actually, the more accurate quote was "My staff makes me look good!"

Twenty-one hundred copies of this public document were produced at an estimated cost of 26¢ each for a total cost of $546.



As a budgetary measure, some western states have proposed using the "snow cow."

Cartoon by Sean Seville of the Public Affairs Bureau.

Motor Fuels Conversion Task Force

Conversion doesn't seem to be a complicated word. Sounds simple, right?

Ask MDT people who converted the motor fuels system with over 1,000 programs that included:

- the entire accountability for all fuel taxes,
- licensing for the trucking industry,
- gasoline distributors,
- revenue control system,
- cashiering of all tax collections for motor fuels, and
- the accounts receivable.

The conversion process, completed Saturday, February 1, was aided by the Motor Fuels Conversion Task Force, who defined direction and deadlines.

Members of the task force were: Darrell Zook, Paul Christofferson, Gordon McGaw, Marcia Ala, Dennis Eddlemon, Lori Balcerzak, Molly Hardy, Cayle Wingard, Cindy Anders, Tracy Pippin, Gayna Miros, Gene Hoffman and Mary Ann Robinson.

According to Zook, many other individuals spent long hours testing, converting the filing system and keeping up the daily work in licensing, accounts receivable, audit, processing and gasoline.

INTERchange

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